

Remarks

Claims 1, 11, 17, and 20 are currently amended herein. Claims 1-23 will be pending upon entry of this amendment with claims 2-15 and 23 standing withdrawn from consideration.

Applicant acknowledges the allowability of claims 17-21. Accordingly, claim 17 has been rewritten in independent form to include all of the features of claim 1 and intervening claim 16. Thus, claim 17 and the claims depending therefrom (claims 18-21) are in form for allowance.

Response to Claim Objections

Claim 20 has been amended herein to change the first, second, third, and fourth end portions to fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth end portions, respectively. Accordingly, claim 20 is submitted to be in proper form.

Response to Claim Rejections

Claim 1

Amended claim 1 is directed to a ring mechanism for a loose-leaf binder. The mechanism comprises:

- a thin, elongate plate,
- at least two ring members supported by the elongate plate for relative movement of the ring members between an open position in which the ring members are spaced apart and loose-leaf pages may be received on and removed from at least one of the ring members, and a closed position in which the ring members are engaged to form a ring which is configured to capture the loose-leaf pages on the ring while permitting movement of the pages along the ring,
- a pair of elongate leaves disposed beneath the elongate plate and carried by the elongate plate, the leaves each mounting

a respective one of the ring members and being pivotable relative to the elongate plate between said open and closed positions of the ring members,

the elongate plate having longitudinal ends, at least one of the longitudinal ends including first and second end portions located on one transverse side of the elongate plate, said first and second end portions being bent over to present a longitudinally facing surface which is blunt.

Amended claim 1 is unanticipated by and patentable over the prior art of record, including U.S. Patent No. 2,041,168 (Dawson) because Dawson fails to teach or suggest a ring mechanism including a pair of elongate leaves carried by and disposed beneath the elongate plate wherein the elongate plate is bent over to present a blunt, longitudinally facing surface. It is noted that amended claim 1 continues to read on the elected species of Figs. 14-17, which have elongate leaves beneath and carried by an elongate plate.

The reasons for the present invention are safety and economy. The thin longitudinal edges of the elongate plate, if unbent, can provide a cutting surface, which is undesirable. To resolve this problem without adding more parts (which increases both parts and manufacturing costs), applicant has uniquely bent over the ends of the elongate plate. The prior art, as represented by Dawson, may recognize the desirability of covering the ends, but does so by providing a completely separate piece (i.e., the back plates 18) that must be made and installed. The present amendment further clarifies that it is the same part that is above the hinge plates ("leaves") that has its ends bent over to present a blunt, longitudinally facing surface.

As shown in Figs. 1-4, Dawson discloses a ring mechanism having a spring plate 17 and two, relatively short back plates 18 which cooperate with the spring plate to support a pair of toggle elements 13, 14. The toggle elements 13, 14 are located beneath the spring plate 17 and above the back plates 18. Respective half rings 15, 16 are mounted on the toggle elements 13, 14 and moveable between open and closed positions. Levers 30 are supported at each end of the mechanism for moving the toggle elements 13, 14 and thereby the half rings 15, 16 between open and closed positions. Each of the back plates 18 includes two upturned portions 23 and two lugs 24, 25 for securing each of the levers 30 in place.

The two back plates of Dawson, which are characterized by the Examiner as corresponding to the claimed elongate plate, are located beneath the toggle elements. See, for example, Figs. 3, 5, and 6. In other words, the toggle elements are located above the back plates. Thus, Dawson fails to show a pair of elongate leaves disposed beneath the elongate plate that has bent over end portions as recited in amended claim 1.

Moreover, Dawson discloses that the back plates 18 extend longitudinally outward from the longitudinal ends of the spring plate so that the levers can be located between the upturned ends of the back plates and the spring plate. See page 1, column 2, lines 35-37 of Dawson. In other words, Dawson teaches the spring plate should terminate before the levers and that the levers are held into place allowed to pivot as a result of the upturned 23 and lugs 21, which include bent lugs 24, 25. As a result, Dawson does not provide any motivation or suggestion for one skilled in the art to bend the ends of the spring plate rather than adding an entirely new part.

Accordingly, Dawson fails to teach or suggest a ring mechanism including a pair of elongate leaves disposed beneath the elongate plate and carried by the elongate plate as recited in amended claim 1.

Claims 16 and 22 depend directly from amended claim 1 and are submitted to be patentable for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, favorable consideration of the claims as now presented is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any under payment or credit any over payment to Deposit Account No. 19-1345.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kurt F. James". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "K" and "J".

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